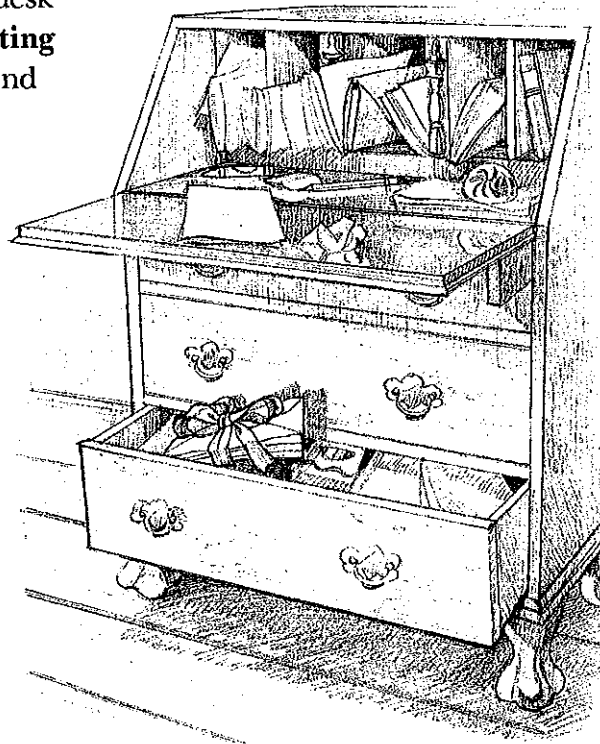


Dear Amanda

by Linnah Gary

Amanda sat moodily on her bed, gazing silently around the room. Her glance fell upon her ancient desk. It had seen every act, had heard every thought expressed in the privacy and quiet of that dim attic room. Amanda noticed the bottom drawer of the desk sticking out. It looked like the **pouting** lip of an angry child. She got up and wandered slowly across the room, intending to close the drawer.

As she neared the old desk, Amanda suddenly remembered something. She quickened her pace. Then she yanked open the stubborn drawer. Inside Amanda found the package of letters. It was tied with a piece of worn blue ribbon. Carefully she lifted the **fragile** pages from the mess of erasers, pencils, and old school papers. Then she worked impatiently at untying the tight knot.



Amanda raised her head for a moment. As she did, she caught her reflection in the dusty mirror above the dresser right next to her bed. She noted with interest the unusual glitter in her gray eyes. She saw a spot of color in her pale cheeks.

Amanda looked closely at the lifeless brown hair which hung about her face. What was wrong with it? she wondered. Unhappy with what she saw, she turned her attention to the bundle of letters clutched tightly in her hands. Settling herself in the chair at the desk, she switched on the bulb overhead. She wondered which letter to read first.

She chose one written on pale blue notepaper. Deep folds wrinkled its once smooth surface. A blurry spot marred the handwriting on the second page. Amanda unfolded the sheets which were no longer crisp. She began to read:

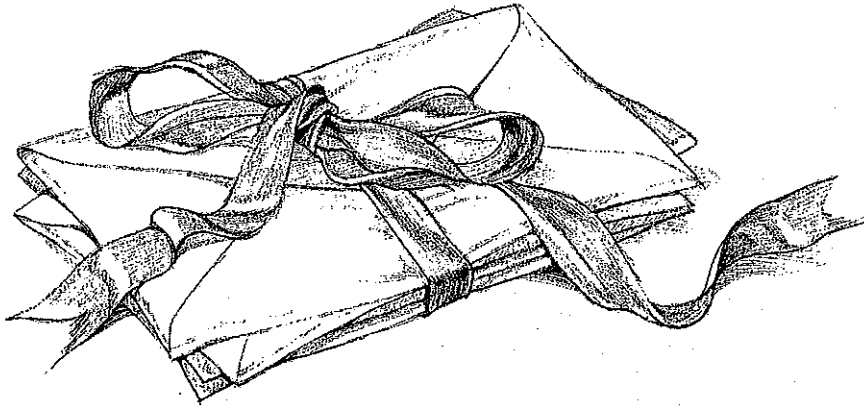
Dear Amanda,

I just got home from practice, and thought I'd write you a letter. I can't talk to those guys on the team. You're the only one who listens and understands. It's great to have a girl who listens the way you do.

We studied poetry today in school. I really like the stuff, but we have to write some of our own for next week. You know for sure I'm no star when it comes to being creative, Mandy. I haven't got the talent you have for writing. You write such beautiful poetry, you ought to **submit** it to a magazine or something. I really mean it. Maybe you could give me a few tips. I'm so lost, and I'm positive you could help, since you . . .

Amanda read on eagerly, losing herself in the precious letters. Uneasily, she remembered how her mother had scolded her about shutting herself up in her room to read. She knew her mother must think it silly for her to even get letters. The thought hurt Amanda, and she comforted herself by saying her mother just didn't understand. Maybe that was why she was always so cross. Amanda felt sure that was the reason.

One letter in particular Amanda loved. It was by far the most worn of



the collection. She opened it and held it closer to the light so that she could see the faded writing more clearly.

My dearest Amanda,

It has been a long time since I have written you. Please forgive me, won't you? I know you will. You are such a kind person.

My sister dragged me along to go shopping with her last week. She asked me to help her pick out some clothes. I certainly wish that you had been along. I don't know much about girls' styles. You have such good taste. Things always look perfect on you. Sis finally picked out a blue dress. I couldn't help thinking how nice it would have looked with your hair. Really, Mandy, I think that you . . .

Amanda loved those lines. At least someone thought that she looked pretty. Her mother always complained about how sloppy Amanda looked.

"Amanda, you're not going to wear that dress, are you?" she always said. "It doesn't do a thing for you. Amanda, I wish you'd do something with your hair. Amanda, for goodness sake, straighten up. Amanda, why don't you try to look a little more pleasant?"

On and on she went that way, until Amanda angrily rushed back to her room. She told herself that her mother didn't really know what she was talking about.

A sharp voice **jolted** Amanda from her deep thoughts.

“Amanda! Just exactly what are you doing up there? I’ve been calling you for the last fifteen minutes. I want you to come down here immediately. Do you hear me? Amanda?”

Amanda didn’t answer. She didn’t want to break the wonderful spell of the letters. Then, hearing loud footsteps on the stairs, she quickly shuffled together the sheets of wrinkled paper. Her mother burst into the room. An angry expression clouded her face.

“Amanda! I thought I told you to get rid of those silly things. Give them to me. And get yourself downstairs, young lady, or your father will hear of this!”

Amanda slammed the door at her mother’s back and stomped furiously back to her desk. Fumbling and angry, she searched frantically for paper and pen. Then she seated herself and began to write.

Dear Amanda,

I’ve got to write to you. You’re so . . .

SELECTING DETAILS FROM THE STORY. Each of the following sentences helps you understand the story. Complete each sentence below by putting an *x* in the box next to the correct answer.

1. When Amanda saw her reflection in the mirror, she
 a. was satisfied with what she saw.
 b. didn't like the way she looked.
 c. wished that her eyes were not gray.
2. The letter that Amanda loved best said that she
 a. had very good taste.
 b. was an excellent athlete.
 c. was probably the smartest person in school.
3. According to Amanda, her mother always complained about
 a. Amanda's friends.
 b. Amanda's classmates.
 c. how sloppy Amanda looked.
4. At the end of the story, Amanda
 a. reached for paper and pen and began to write.
 b. rushed downstairs at once.
 c. gave her mother the letters.

$$\boxed{} \times 5 = \boxed{}$$

NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

HANDLING STORY ELEMENTS. Each of the following questions reviews your understanding of story elements. Put an *x* in the box next to the correct answer to each question.

1. Where is "Dear Amanda" *set*?
 a. in an attic
 b. at the library
 c. at school
2. What happened first in the *plot* of "Dear Amanda"?
 a. Amanda slammed the door and stomped back to her desk.
 b. Amanda's mother demanded that Amanda come downstairs at once.
 c. Amanda opened the drawer and found the package of letters.
3. Which word best *characterizes* Amanda?
 a. popular
 b. unhappy
 c. cheerful
4. In this story, there is *conflict* between
 a. Amanda's mother and father.
 b. Amanda and someone who was writing letters to her.
 c. Amanda and her mother.

$$\boxed{} \times 5 = \boxed{}$$

NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

OBSERVING NEW VOCABULARY WORDS. Answer the following vocabulary questions by putting an *x* in the box next to the correct answer. The vocabulary words are printed in **boldface** in the story. If you wish, look back at the words before you answer the questions.

1. Amanda carefully lifted the fragile pages from the mess of old school papers. The word *fragile* means
 a. large.
 b. sturdy.
 c. easily broken.
2. The drawer stuck out like the pouting lip of an angry child. A lip that is *pouting* is
 a. injured.
 b. pushed out unhappily.
 c. very thin.
3. The letter suggested that Amanda submit her poetry to a magazine. As used here, the word *submit* means
 a. send or offer.
 b. purchase or buy.
 c. read or recite.
4. A sharp voice jolted Amanda from her deep thoughts. What is the meaning of the word *jolted*?
 a. shocked
 b. soothed
 c. pleased

	× 5 =	
NUMBER CORRECT		YOUR SCORE

COMPLETING A CLOZE PASSAGE. Complete the following paragraph by filling in each blank with one of the words listed in the box below. Each of the words appears in the story. Since there are five words and four blanks, one word in the group will not be used.

“Dear Amanda” was written by Linnah Gary when she was still a student in high _____₁. Linnah’s English teacher thought that Linnah’s writing showed _____₂. He advised her to send the story to a _____₃. It was published there, won an award, and has appeared in several short story _____₄.

talent	school
magazine	
beautiful	collections

	× 5 =	
NUMBER CORRECT		YOUR SCORE

KNOWING HOW TO READ CRITICALLY. Each of the following questions will help you to think critically about the selection. Put an x in the box next to the correct answer.

1. We may infer (figure out) that the letters to Amanda were written by
 - a. Amanda's friends.
 - b. Amanda's classmates.
 - c. Amanda herself.

2. Which statement is true?
 - a. Amanda usually got tired of reading the letters.
 - b. Writing and reading the letters made Amanda feel better about herself.
 - c. Amanda thought that most of the letters were very boring.

3. Clues in the story suggest that Amanda
 - a. didn't think she was pretty.
 - b. thought she was beautiful.
 - c. almost never got angry.

4. A "blurry spot marred the handwriting" on the page of one wrinkled letter. This spot was probably caused by a
 - a. tear.
 - b. raindrop.
 - c. glass of water.

	× 5 =	
NUMBER CORRECT		YOUR SCORE

Questions for Writing and Discussion

- One letter stated that Amanda was creative and had a talent for writing. Do you agree with that opinion? Explain your answer.
- Suppose you could offer some words of advice to Amanda. What would you tell her?
- The author wrote "Dear Amanda" when she was 17 years old. Does that surprise you? Why?

Use the boxes below to total your scores for the exercises. Then write your score on pages 150 and 151.

	+		S	SELECTING DETAILS FROM THE STORY
	+		H	HANDLING STORY ELEMENTS
	+		O	OBSERVING NEW VOCABULARY WORDS
	+		C	COMPLETING A CLOZE PASSAGE
	+		K	KNOWING HOW TO READ CRITICALLY
	▼		Score Total: Story 3	